

## **2008 Innovations Awards Program APPLICATION**

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-M-02IA

**Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:**

State: **IOWA**

Assign Program Category (applicant): **Health & Human Services - Children & Families**

1. Program Name: **Alternative to Contempt (Parenting Program)**
2. Administering Agency: **Iowa Department of Human Services, Child Support Recovery**
3. Contact Person (Name & Title): **Jeanne Nesbit, Division Administrator**
4. Address: **400 SW 8<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ste H, Des Moines, IA 50309-4619**
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7. E-mail Address **[jnesbit@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:jnesbit@dhs.state.ia.us)**
8. Web site Address **<https://childsupport.dhs.state.ia.us>**
9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

**This program provides a diversion for severely noncompliant child support payors who may otherwise be required to serve jail time for non-payment of support. These individuals voluntarily participate in the program, undergo a needs assessment, utilize community resources to address needs and receive intensive case management to aid in the removal of barriers preventing them from paying their support.**

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

**2 years and 9 months**

11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

**The program was created to elicit child support compliance without the use of incarceration. The problems were repeated non-payment of child support and the ineffectiveness of existing enforcement tools with this specific population of payors.**

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

**In a coordinated effort between Child Support Recovery and the local district court, payors are provided the opportunity to voluntarily participate in this program as an alternative to jail. Following their hearing participants are required to make contact with the program coordinator, complete a needs assessment and begin complying with the requirements of the program. The program requirements include:**

- **Active job searches**
- **Monthly efforts to meet child support obligations even in lesser amounts than court ordered.**
- **Consistent attendance at weekly parenting classes.**
- **Frequent communication with the program coordinator.**
- **Substance abuse treatment and/or monthly drug tests.**
- **Mental health counseling**
- **Utilization of all other resources as needed or identified by the needs assessment.**

**To assist program participants with meeting requirements, the program coordinator is actively involved in monitoring participant activities, providing decision-making guidance and removing barriers such as transportation. Program compliance and completion is determined by the courts through a series of bi-monthly compliance hearings.**

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

**Severely non-compliant payors previously had no alternative to incarceration and child support recovery has not historically provided individualized case management to non-paying parents.**

14. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

**The position of program coordinator was created and funded along with minimal start up costs for office equipment. Many existing materials and technology already in place within the Child Support Recovery Unit are utilized for this program. As a result, start-up costs were minimal.**

15. What are the program's annual operational costs?

**The program's annual operational costs are approximately \$120,000.00, which includes the salaries of the program coordinator, a recently added assistant coordinator, and the costs of some services provided to participants.**

16. How is the program funded?

**The program is funded by a state legislative appropriation from the federal TANF block grant funding.**

17. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

**It required legislative appropriation language, Iowa Administrative Code, Chapter 218, Section 7.14.**

18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

**The program coordinator communicates with program participants via cell phone. Participant case records are updated on the existing Child Support mainframe computer system. Software created by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families is used to collect participant data and to produce results-based reports.**

19. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

**To the best of our knowledge this type of program started in Missouri. We do not have the innovator's information.**

20. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

**A similar program exists in Kansas City, MO, to the best of our knowledge.**

21. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

**The program has been fully implemented and is beginning to expand to a second judicial district in another area of the state.**

22. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

- **To date, over \$320,000 in child support has been collected from the program participants.**
- **Another \$150,000 in child support has been forgiven by the custodial parent.**
- **Over 8,000 days of jail time have been avoided with an estimated savings of \$400,000.**
- **120 participants are currently active in the program.**
- **Customer satisfaction.**

23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

**The program has grown from 4 participants to over 100. The program has also grown in its' partnership with community resources. It has become recognized throughout the court system and has gained respect among the child support payor population. The total amount of child support payments collected from participants has grown to an average of \$15,000/month.**

24. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

**Some states may be required to pass legislation in order to implement this program. States will want to work in concert with their judicial branch to form a partnership with the court system. Significant effort is required on the ground to build relationships with the court, service providers and other community organizations. Communication with the affected custodial parent is a key to successfully offering this non-traditional service for the collection of child support.**